

Written testimony to the Finance Revenue and Bonding Committee: S.B. 946 AN  
ACT CONCERNING REVENUE ITEMS TO IMPLEMENT THE  
GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

March 9, 2015

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Ladies and gentlemen of the Finance Committee, I am testifying today **against** S.B. 946. I urge Connecticut legislators to weigh the benefits of defunding the Community Investment Act (CIA) before voting to do so. I am a sixth generation dairy farmer from Woodstock. I milk 160 cows on 300 acres, and have 3 full time employees. I also sit as a board member for the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District. As a dairy farmer, and a proponent of sustainable agriculture, I see the broad reaches of the Community investment Act. Most importantly the CIA funds the crucial Dairy Support Program. It also contributes to farmland preservation and the Ag Viability and Farm Transition Grant programs. **This unprecedented sweep of funds would undermine the investment and progress the CIA has made in Connecticut's rural community during the past 10 years.**

First and foremost Connecticut's dairy farms have survived and grown to provide fresh milk, jobs and open space preservation due to the safety net created by the Dairy Sustainability Account in the CIA. Our market pricing this year has fallen drastically as butter and powder markets crashed in the last quarter of 2014. On our own small farm I am facing a disaster this year that is beyond my control. For 2014 our pay per hundred weight (cwt) of milk averaged \$24.28. This year our yearly average price for milk is \$17.68/cwt. This is a loss of \$6.60 for every 10 gallons of milk that leaves my farm, and at the end of the year we will be \$244,000 behind 2014. Keeping in mind that UCONN's benchmark Cost of Production (COP) for Connecticut Dairy farms is \$36.60/cwt, at the end of this year I will be almost \$698,000 behind my cost of production. These are my own real figures. I am only one of the over 150 Connecticut dairy farmers providing the fresh milk our state needs.

The Connecticut Dairy Sustainability Account is needed now more than ever. Our dairy safety net is the only real chance that our farmers have to survive the record breaking price decline that we are experiencing. It is worth noting that the Dairy Support Program is not a guaranteed paycheck for Connecticut's dairy farmers. The payments bridge the gap between what we are paid for our milk and 80% of our cost of production. Funded by a revenue stream outside of the general budget, the program has been heralded as a model to be followed by other states. This year Connecticut's \$1.1 billion dollar dairy industry will be crippled without the CIA funding. The result will be the loss of small farms like mine. Once these farms are gone they will never come back.

The CIA program funds more than the Dairy Sustainability Account. It also supports the Connecticut Grown Program, the CT Farmlink, the Seafood Advisory

Council, the CT Farm Wine Development Council, the Ag Viability and Transition Grants and provides support monies for the Dept. of Ag's Farmland Preservation Unit. These are far reaching programs that work to sustain Connecticut's agricultural base and preserve and promote our farms for the next generation of CT farmers. Farmland preservation should be a huge source of pride for our state. We are preserving more than a way of life. We are insuring that our state has a stable food supply for generations to come. It is through the Ag Viability and Transition Grants that farmers have a partnership with the State giving them the tools they need to move their farms forward. These tools include new technologies, barns for animals and hay, and feed and manure storage facilities to store crops and waste in an environmentally sustainable manner.

In conclusion, the continued funding to the Community Investment Act is crucial to Connecticut's agricultural economy. As a Dairy Farmer, I am unsure how I will be able to handle my loss of income from the milk market. As someone who's family has been farming for six generations (with a seventh growing up quickly), I can't imagine Connecticut Agriculture losing the benefits of the Community Investment Act. I ask you to stand with me against S.B. 946, and stand up for Dairy and Agriculture in the state of Connecticut. For a future of a sustainable food supply and future farmers to work the land, we need the continued funding of the Community Investment Act to keep Connecticut Agriculture growing.

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If you have any questions or comments I can be reached at 860-933-5820